

Gambian vice president reiterates gov't's commitment to support tourism

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By Abdoulie John



Aja Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President and Minister of Women's Affairs, has reiterated the Gambia government's commitment and unwavering support to the tourism industry. She was delivering an address during the opening of the 35th Annual Congress of Africa Travel Association (ATA), which is being held on Gambian soil for the second time; the last being in 1984.

“In recognizing our country's achievements in this fragile industry, I would like to recall that my government's commitment and unflinching support to the tourism and travel trade hinges on our national vision of transforming the Gambia into a tourism paradise, thriving on free-market policies and a vibrant private sector that is self-reliant and enterprising, guaranteeing a well-balanced ecosystem and a decent standard of living for all,” VP Njie-Saidy stated.

She used the opportunity to reveal an elaborate Tourism Master Plan by the Gambia government currently being implemented, which focuses on growth, development and marketing of the country as an interesting, attractive and exciting tourism destination.

She further stated that this master plan seeks to improve the quality of the country's tourism products as well as ensure diversification in such areas as ecotourism, sports tourism, cultural and heritage tourism.

“Quantitative improvements will be pursued in relation to such variables as tourist arrivals, job creation, inter-sectoral linkages, entrepreneurial innovation and participation, training of personnel and regulatory frameworks,” she stated.



“Essentially, the Master Plan has been crafted in such a way that mutually rewarding partnership and outcomes could be derived for the Government, the private sector, tourists and people of The Gambia.”

The opening ceremony also heard addresses from the Gambian Minister of Tourism and Culture, Fatou Mass Jobe-Njie; Chairman of the Host Committee, ATA Gambia Chapter, Alieu Secka; and ATA International President and Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism of the United Republic of Tanzania, Hon. Shamsa Mwangunga.

The event which attracted participants from USA and all over Africa was also marked by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Gambia’s Minister of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment, Abdou Kolley, and ATA President Hon. Shamsa Mwangunga. This is a consecration of a strong interest towards partnering what the African Union (AU) and ATA have expressed. As such, the African Union’s Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, Dr. Elham M.A. Ibrahim, requested that ATA drafts an MoU between the two entities. Accordingly, this will aim at presenting a stronger and more unified voice to advocate for investment in the tourism industry.

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